

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 225211
ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 PCH-02 PM-05
H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 SAA-01
SES-02 SIG-03 SSO-00 INRE-00 SSM-05 /099 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:REUNDERLAND:CEK
APPROVED BY NEA/P:REUNDERLAND
PA/PRS - MR CARTER
H - MR FLATEN
SSM - MR MC ANDREW
NEA/IAI - MR KORN
NEA/ARN - MR HOWELL
NEA/EGY - MR MARTHINSEN
NEA/ARP - MR TWINAM

-----119311 060123Z /64

O 060006Z SEP 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 225211

USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
SECDEF WASHDC 0000
JCS WASHDC 0000
CIA WASHDC 0000
USICA
NSC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS POUCH

UNCLAS STATE 225211

CINCEUR FOR POLAD, TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - SEPTEMBER 5

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EX-CERPTS FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR SEPTEMBER 5, 1978. SPOKESMAN TODAY WAS HODDING CARTER III.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY REACTION TO THE MOVEMENT OF LARGE NUMBERS OF SYRIAN ANTI-AIRCRAFT UNITS INTO LEBANON?

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 225211

A. ON THE ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY UNITS, WE HAVE SEEN THOSE REPORTS AND WE BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE TRUE. WE ARE NOT AWARE, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, ABOUT THE INCLUSION OF SAM MISSILES. ESSENTIALLY WE DO NOT SEE IT AS ALTERING THE LEBANESE SITUATION, WHICH IS VERY COMPLICATED. WE ARE DOING ALL WE CAN TO DIFFUSE TENSIONS IN THE COUNTRY.

TO THE LIMITED DEGREE I CAN GIVE YOU A SITUATION REPORT, THERE WERE, AS YOU ALL SAW, EARLY MORNING CLASHES YESTERDAY IN BEIRUT BETWEEN SYRIAN UNITS IN THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE AND CHRISTIAN MILITIAS, AND THEN EARLIER TODAY BETWEEN RIVAL CHRISTIAN FACTIONS IN THE BEIRUT SUBURB. BUT OUR LAST REPORTS ARE THAT IT IS GENERALLY CALM THROUGH THE COUNTRY.

THERE ALSO WAS A BEIRUT PRESS REPORT, WHICH I AM NOT ABLE TO GO ANY FURTHER WITH, THAT THERE WERE TWO ISRAELI AIRCRAFT OVERFLYING BEIRUT. BUT I DON'T HAVE A CONFIRMATION ON THAT EITHER.

Q. SO FAR AS YOU KNOW, ARE THESE THE FIRST UNITS OF THIS SIZE THAT HAVE BEEN MOVED IN BY SYRIA?

A. OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT?

Q. THIS KIND OF EQUIPMENT AND THIS NUMBER.

A. YES. I WILL TAKE THE QUESTION. I AM NOT SURE, BUT I THINK IF IT IS BEING NOTED THIS WAY THAT IT PROBABLY IS, BUT I WILL HAVE TO TAKE IT. I DO NOT KNOW.

Q. WELL, WHEN YOU GO INTO THIS, COULD YOU FIND OUT WHAT THE PRESUMED PURPOSE IS?

A. I WILL SEE IF WE CAN MAKE SUCH A READING.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 225211

Q. DO YOU BELIEVE -- PERHAPS YOU COULD TAKE THIS. DO YOU THINK THAT THE MOVEMENT IS IN ANY WAY RELATED TO THE VISIT OF THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, MR. KHADDAM, TO MOSCOW OVER A FEW DAYS AGO?

A. I DON'T THINK THAT WE HAVE ANY WAY OF SUGGESTING A LINK THERE.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY REPORTS ACCOMPANYING THE REPORTS OF THE ARTILLERY ANTI-AIRCRAFT THAT THESE UNITS HAVE BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY SOVIET ADVISERS?

A. NO, WE DON'T. WE DON'T HAVE ANY CONFIRMATION OF SUCH PRESENCE.

Q. YOU SAID WE ARE DOING ALL WE CAN TO REDUCE THE CONFLICT. CONSIDERING THAT THE LEADER OF AT LEAST ONE OF THE PARTIES AT ISSUE HERE IN LEBANON HAS, CERTAINLY CHAMOUN HAS CERTAINLY PLEADED AND DEMANDED THAT THE SYRIAN "PEACE-KEEPING" FORCE GET OUT, AND SEEING THAT WE DON'T SAY ANYTHING AND WE WAIT FOR THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO SAY SOMETHING AND THEY ARE AT LEAST REPORTEDLY DOMINATED BY THESE SAME SYRIANS, IS THERE ANY POSSIBILITY IN YOUR VIEW THAT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO SUGGEST THAT THE SYRIANS WITH THEIR AT LEAST REPORTED SAM MISSILES GO HOME LIKE WE ASKED THE ISRAELIS TO GO HOME OR IS THIS JUST WE WILL NEVER DO THAT?

A. SO LONG AS THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON WISHES TO HAVE THIS SUPPORT AS THEY SEE IT.

Q. EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE DOMINATED BY THE SYRIANS, IT IS A LITTLE HARD TO EXPECT THEM TO SAY TO THE SYRIANS GO
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 225211

HOME WHEN THEY HAVE GOT ALL THIS HEAVY ARMORY IN THERE.

A. THAT IS YOUR CHARACTERIZATION.

Q. DO YOU DISAGREE WITH THAT CHARACTERIZATION?

A. I SIMPLY AM NOT ABLE TO CHARACTERIZE IN SUCH A WAY. IT IS THE ONLY GOVERNMENT, AND IT IS THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON.

Q. LET ME JUST FOLLOW UP THIS SYRIAN THING BECAUSE YOU SAID YOU HAD SEEN THE REPORTS AND YOU BELIEVED THEY WERE TRUE. I AM JUST GOING OVER MY NOTES. YOU DON'T SAY ANYWHERE HERE THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED. IS THERE ANY CONCERN IN THE DEPARTMENT ABOUT THE MOVEMENT OF THESE?

A. WE HAVE A GENERAL CONCERN ABOUT THE ENTIRE SITUATION WHICH WE HAVE EXPRESSED A NUMBER OF TIMES AND I CONTINUE TO EXPRESS IT. WE FEEL THAT ANYTHING WHICH ENHANCES THE POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE. I AM NOT TRYING TO MAKE THAT CONNECTION, HOWEVER.

AND TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, NO, I DON'T HAVE A DIRECT STATEMENT OF CONCERN ON THAT.

ANSWERS TO TAKEN QUESTION AT NOON BRIEFING, SEPT 5, 1978:

Q. IS THIS THE FIRST TIME SYRIA HAS INTRODUCED ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY OF THIS SIZE AND KIND INTO LEBANON?

A. --SYRIAN FORCES IN THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE IN LEBANON HAVE PREVIOUSLY HAD SIMILAR ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS.

Q. WHAT IS SYRIA'S PURPOSE IN BRINGING THESE WEAPONS INTO LEBANON?

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 06 STATE 225211

A. --YOU WILL HAVE TO ASK THE LEBANESE AND SYRIAN GOVERNMENTS. CHRISTOPHER

NOTE BY OC/T: POUCHED TO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS.

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